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ART. XI.—*Memoir of ROBERT WHEATON, with Selections from his Writings.* Boston: Ticknor, Reed, & Fields. 1854. pp. 385.

WE have here, delicately traced by a sister's hand, the outlines of a mind and a life of singular beauty and promise. Robert Wheaton, the son of Henry Wheaton, the distinguished diplomatist and world-renowned writer on international law, was born in 1826, and spent nearly the whole of his short life in Europe, mostly at Copenhagen, Berlin, and Paris, where he enjoyed the best advantages of education furnished in those cities, without being separated, except for comparatively a short period, from the fostering influences of a home enlightened by the most cultivated society, and enriched by the intelligence, the refinement, the warm affections and Christian graces, which lend a charm to the privacy of domestic life. He was brought up in those European capitals with as much simplicity and purity as he could have been in the retirement of a New England village. In 1847 he returned to America, and in the spring of 1848, by the death of his father, between whom and himself the most intimate and confidential relations had always existed, new and heavy responsibilities devolved upon him. But he was not unprepared for them. He was engaged in the study of the law, and at the same time filled the office of a teacher in Harvard University, where he secured, to an unusual extent, the confidence and affection of all with whom he was connected. In July, 1851, he was admitted to the Boston bar, and on the 9th of the October following, four days after he had completed his twenty-fourth year, he died at his mother's home in Providence.

Such is the brief and naked outline of a life, short indeed, but filled up with as many attractive qualities, as many kind thoughts and graceful acts, as are often allowed to one so young. As a scholar he was led by high aims through habits of well-ordered industry to uncommon attainments, and his example is one which might well be held up to all young students, while in the different relations of life his conduct was such as must win their esteem and love. We gladly recom-

mend the book to them, and to all who as parents and teachers would direct the education of the young. It is modestly and simply prepared, with fine touches of character and deep feeling,—written evidently with a tearful eye, but with a trusting heart and a hand that firmly suppresses more than it allows to appear. The delicate labor of love could not have been more delicately or more lovingly performed, and yet the portraiture is as faithful as it is delicate. They who knew Robert Wheaton while he lived will not shrink from this as an exaggerated or distorted picture of their friend.

We were going to say, that there was nothing unhealthy or precocious in the development of his faculties. His writings evince calmness, good sense, and that desire to see all round a subject, which, when united, as in this case, with habits of patient research, give the surest promise of constant growth, and of intellectual distinction and success. But perhaps he was right, when, in quoting the remark, "A soul of thirty in a body of fourteen," he says, sadly, "I find in it my portrait at fourteen." It may be that the orderly and harmonious habits of his early life, grasping at no sudden prize, but looking on to distant results, gave some evidence of a premature wisdom, and some presage of an early death. He always looked upon himself as destined to a short life. Except for the sake of his friends, he desired no other. And as we think of him now with a knowledge of the event, we see in his early character indications of what the result must have been.

The Memoir is a touching, a beautiful one. But it belongs to a class of books which we can ill afford to have multiplied among us. The sense of what we and the community have lost in furnishing such a subject for a Memoir, is too painful to allow us to enjoy, as we otherwise might, the rare and lovely traits which are brought before us.

This book, which we have read with such mingled emotions of pleasure and sadness, calls up before us a whole series of lives cut off just as it was beginning to appear how richly endowed and full of promise they were. Among them are Margaret and Lucretia Davidson, whose names are endeared to us, and made to hold a lasting place in our literature, through the beautiful Memoirs of their lives which have been

prepared by Miss Sedgwick and Washington Irving. To these we may add William Friend Durant, "an only son," of whose short life (for he died when in his nineteenth year) a very instructive and affecting account was given by his father, Robert Swain, and Robert Troup Paine, both, like Durant and Robert Wheaton, only sons, whose lives were too beautiful to perish wholly from the earth; and James Jackson, Jr., whose Memoirs by his father, so simple, modest, and truthful, we should delight to have placed in the hands of every boy who is capable of being touched by a pure example of youthful virtue and intelligence. We might add other names more widely known in the world of letters. There is Henry Kirke White, at the age of twenty-one, sinking, to use his own expressive words,

"As sinks a stranger in the crowded streets
Of busy London,"

but to whose name and writings the sympathy excited by his early death has given an interest, with which the faithful labors of a longer life might have failed to invest them. Chatterton, "the marvellous boy," born in 1752, and dying before he had completed his eighteenth year, though superior in genius, does not awaken the same undisturbed feelings of love and respect which are inspired by the other names that we have mentioned, or by that of Keats, who comes before us almost as the ideal of a youthful poet, calling out all our tenderness, but too frail and sensitive for life, and, at the age of twenty-four, passing away,

"Purpureus veluti quum flos succisus aratro
Languescit moriens."

Living to a maturer age, though belonging to this same class, is Arthur Hallam, known within a limited circle through the Memoirs by his father, but known wherever our language is spoken through Tennyson's "In Memoriam," where his life and memory have become, like Milton's Lycidas, immortal.

It is not, however, our purpose to dwell on these examples of youthful promise, "fading timelessly," but rather on other topics suggested by them. Beautiful as have been the characters of those who have passed away so early, promising as their works have been, and touching as are the memorials

of their lives that remain to us, there is no one among them all who has left a single work which, on its own merits, would take a permanent place in the higher literature of the world. Their names are preserved. Their lives are read with interest and profit. But maturer thoughts, and faculties enriched by longer study and a riper experience, are needed for the construction of those great works which live on in the minds and hearts of after generations. The richest intellectual soils are the slowest to mature their fruits. They may be, and they often are, the earliest to give indications of future greatness. But their best works are usually those which are produced after they have completed the first half of their three-score and ten years. Wonderful stories are told of such men as the Admirable Crichton, whose life was two years shorter than that of Robert Wheaton, and John Picus of Mirandola, who was already one of the most accomplished scholars of his time when he died, in 1494, at the age of thirty-one. We hear of their marvellous attainments, but no one reads their works.

The memory is sometimes singularly retentive in early life. The powers of acquisition are never perhaps greater. There is a quickness of perception and emotion, a rapidity of utterance, and an extraordinary dialectic skill. But the formative faculty which perfectly masters and controls its materials, moulding them into grand and beautiful poetic creations, or drawing from them the largest inductions of wisdom, belongs to a later age. The richness of style, which in all the higher works of literature has such power over us, but which is so much a part of the thought itself, and of the emotions by which the thought is pervaded, seldom belongs to the earlier productions of any distinguished writer.

From the age of twenty to that of thirty-five or forty is a period of great efficiency and activity. Politicians, orators, warriors, and artists are then formed, and some of their greatest triumphs gained. Alexander, Hannibal, and Napoleon had made themselves known by some of their most extraordinary military achievements before they were thirty. William Pitt was the prime minister of England when twenty-five, and as a statesman and debater in the House of Commons sustained himself from that day onward against such men as

Fox and Burke. In our own country, Alexander Hamilton was but little more than thirty years old when, in the Convention for framing the Constitution of the United States, he showed himself inferior to none of his able and experienced associates, and before he was thirty-seven, as Secretary of the Treasury, he had matured and carried into effect the most complicated and difficult measures for the successful administration of the new government.

But in the richer productions of genius which belong to the highest departments of literature, a longer preparation is needed, and among the greatest authors that the world has known we can call to mind only two or three who would have left any of their best works behind them, if they had died before the age of thirty-five, or even forty. Stores for future use have not only to be laid up, but to be prepared in the mind by the mellowing influence of time. A facility in the use of materials is to be acquired. The faculties are to be strengthened and harmonized. The grand thoughts which are to be perpetuated in later works have, perhaps, been suggested. An ideal of what is to be dawns vaguely upon the mind. The intellectual character is formed. But the perfected results are usually of a later growth. Newton, when twenty-four years old, had already anticipated the two great discoveries which were afterwards to lie at the foundation of his enduring fame; but he was forty before he had verified his grand conception of the law of gravitation, forty-two before he had completed his calculations, and forty-four before the great work on which his reputation rests was ready for the world. Bacon at the age of twenty-three had "taken all knowledge to be his province"; but if he and Newton had died before the age of forty, neither of them would have left any production to hold the highest place in his peculiar department, and if remembered at all, they would have been remembered only as among the lesser divinities of thought. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was probably written when he was thirty-three, and revised three years afterwards. But, with this exception, his grandest works, *The Tempest*, *Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Othello*, were among his latest productions, and composed after he was forty years of age. Milton was early moved by a consciousness of the ex-

traordinary powers which God had intrusted to him, but he was fifty-nine when his *Paradise Lost* was published, and his *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained* belong to a considerably later period. At the age of thirty-seven Spenser published the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*, and died at forty-five without having completed the poem. Chaucer was sixty years old when he began to compose his *Canterbury Tales*, the most delightful of all his poems, overflowing with animal spirits and youthful emotion, and marked by humor, wit, sound sense, and the finest instincts of poetic genius. All the most admired of Dryden's writings, his *Satires* and *Fables*, his *Don Sebastian*, and his *Ode to St. Cecilia*, were composed after he was fifty. Indeed, the *Ode to St. Cecilia* was written after he had entered his sixty-seventh year. Pope began to write verses when he was only a child, and composed his *Rape of the Lock*, his *Temple of Fame*, and *Eloise and Abelard*, while still young; but his ablest and most finished poems, his *Dunciad*, his *Essay on Man*, and his *Epistles*, were published after he was forty. Dr. Young's preface to the *Second Part of his Night Thoughts* bears the date of 1744, when he was sixty-five years old. Goldsmith published his *Deserted Village* at the age of forty, and Cowper, "the most popular poet of his generation, and the best of English letter-writers," prepared no volume for the press till after he had completed his fiftieth year. Dr. Robertson was forty-eight years old when he finished his *History of Charles V.* Hume was fifty when he completed his *History of England*; and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a work which, with all its faults, is perhaps the greatest monument of historical genius that has ever been given to the world, was not published in full till 1787, when the author had entered his fifty-first year.

Thus, if the most eminent of our English writers before the present century had died at the age of forty, scarcely a single production that now holds a lofty rank in the higher departments of literature would be left in our libraries. The ablest philosophical works, the most popular and elaborate histories, the most elevated and delightful poetry, would be swept away, and, except a few of Shakespeare's plays and the earlier parts

of the Faerie Queene, hardly a work belonging to the highest region of thought and fancy would remain.

We have not looked with the same care into the literature of other nations; but a momentary glance at the great works which belong rather to the civilized world than to any particular country, will tend to show that they have been the products of mature thought. Of Homer's age we know nothing. Virgil died at fifty-one, leaving his *Æneid* so far unfinished that he requested in his will that it should be destroyed. Of the great tragedians of antiquity there is no drama now extant which is supposed to have been written before the author was forty-three years old, and only two, *The Persians* of *Æschylus* and the *Alcestis* of *Euripides*, that were brought out before the writer had completed his fiftieth year. *The Orestes* and the *Iphigenia at Aulis* were composed after *Euripides* was seventy years old, and the *Œdipus at Colonus* is believed to have been written by *Sophocles* after he had lived more than fourscore years.

Of modern writers, *Dante* and *Cervantes* are the two whose influence has been most felt beyond the limits of their own country. *Dante*, though he represents himself in the beginning of his great work as

“Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita,”

must have been more than ten years beyond the middle of the journey of life before he had completed that extraordinary poem, which is rightly called *La Divina Commedia*. And *Cervantes*, born in 1547, did not publish the First Part of his *Don Quixote*, which he had composed “in the midst of poverty and embarrassments,” till 1605. The Second Part was published ten years later, when he was sixty-eight years old. We cannot help copying in this connection a few sentences from *Mr. Ticknor's* admirable work on *Spanish Literature*:—

“But the life of *Cervantes*, with all its troubles and sufferings, was now fast drawing to a close. In October of the same year, 1615, he published the Second Part of his *Don Quixote*; and in its dedication to the Count de Lenos, who had for some time favored him, he alludes to his failing health, and intimates that he hardly looked for the continuance of his life beyond a few months. His spirits, however, which

had survived his sufferings in the Levant and at Algiers, and which, as he approached his seventieth year, had been sufficient to produce a work like the Second Part of *Don Quixote*, did not forsake him, now that his strength was wasting away under the influence of disease and old age. On the contrary, with unabated vivacity, he urged forward his romance of '*Persiles and Sigismunda*'; anxious only that life enough should be allowed him to finish it, as the last offering of his gratitude to his generous patron. In the spring he went to Esquivias, where was the little estate he had received with his wife, and after his return wrote a Preface to his unpublished romance, full of a delightful and simple humor, in which he tells a pleasant story of being overtaken in his ride back to Madrid by a medical student, who gave him much good advice about the dropsy, under which he was suffering; to which he replied, that his pulse had already warned him that he was not to live beyond the next Sunday. 'And so,' says he at the conclusion of this remarkable Preface, 'farewell to jesting, farewell to my merry humors, farewell to my gay friends, for I feel that I am dying, and have no desire but soon to see you happy in the other life.' — Vol. II. pp. 97, 98.

We have pursued this subject further than we otherwise should, on account of an impression which seems to prevail pretty extensively in this country, that youth is the only time for the exercise of original, and especially of inventive genius. We remember to have heard it stated in a public lecture, some sixteen or seventeen years ago, by a writer who now is himself an effectual confutation of what he then maintained, that no man after the age of thirty is likely to make any important contributions to the original thought of the world. And that idea enters pretty largely into the spirit of our times. We would do nothing to chill the ardent expectations of youth. We gladly welcome into our ranks, from year to year, the young, who, having completed but little more than a score of years, throw new ardor into the community of letters, and quicken the somewhat heavy pace of their elders. There is a contagion in their enthusiasm that we love to feel as it comes like the breath of May over the brown fields. The old Michael Angelo should not be driven out of the temple by the winning and beautiful genius of the youthful Raphael, but should rather feel a new spring-time sending its warm gales to quicken his tardy pulse and inspire him with fresh hopes for the future. But, however important the immediate

influence of writings composed by very young persons may be (and they certainly do much to clear the sluggish and stagnant waters of life), and however glad we may be to welcome them to the world of letters, it is well for them to remember that youth is principally a period of preparation, and that the greatest works of genius, those which outlive the fashions of the day and the weightier vicissitudes of thought and feeling that mark the progress of centuries, have been, almost without exception, the finished products of man's maturest years. Most works of this high and enduring character have received their last touches, if not their body and their form, after the author's mind had been enriched by the thought and the experience of half a century.

There is something fascinating in a career like that of Picus of Mirandola, and an indescribable charm in the memoirs of those who, like Robert Wheaton and others whom we have mentioned or left unnamed, make life beautiful, and in the freshness of their early hopes and affections pass from us. Their example must have a salutary influence on the young. We rejoice in such books, though they are purchased at a cost which we can ill afford. The blossom is beautiful, though in plucking it death must destroy the fruit which alone can show to us the ripe fulfilment of its promise.

In some departments of literature, the best specimens that we have are from the young. The best songs have, we believe, been mostly composed by young persons. We need not mention the name of Burns, or Moore, or Barry Cornwall, whose early lyrics have been read and sung with such delight by persons of every rank and occupation. Campbell's best songs, and among them are the noblest patriotic and war songs ever written,—"The Exile of Erin," "The Soldier's Dream," "Hohenlinden," "Ye Mariners of England," "The Battle of the Baltic,"—were composed before he was twenty-six. So our finest naval lyric, the "Lines to the Frigate Constitution," by Oliver Wendell Holmes, was written when the now *venerable* author was a very young man.

It seems natural that the songs of a people, perfumed with the fine aroma of youthful love and enthusiasm, should come from those with whom the enchantment and the spell have

not yet been banished by the sterner experience and more severely common-sense views of advancing years. But there is another field of poetry, which we should on *a priori* grounds assign to a riper age, which has nevertheless been most successfully cultivated by the young. We mean that which usually passes under the name of religious poetry. One who examines with reference to this point any of our most popular selections of sacred poems, will, we think, be surprised to see how large a part of it belongs to the young. The most touchingly beautiful pieces on death and the glories of immortality will be found to have been written by those whose visions of heavenly bliss have not been clouded by too long a stay in the damp atmosphere of this mortal world. George Herbert, with his "Lyrics of the Temple," and Henry Vaughan, whose lines beginning, "They are all gone to the world of light," make one of the sweetest and divinest songs of immortality that have ever been written to comfort and uplift the mourner's heart, gave themselves up to more commonplace duties before they had reached the meridian of life. We are not quite sure of the fact, but we believe that both Watts and Doddridge wrote their hymns before they had prepared the heavier prose compositions which they regarded as their serious occupation. Milton was but seventeen when he wrote his exquisite stanzas, marred perhaps by the pedantry of his age, "On the Death of a Fair Infant," and but a few years older, we suppose, when he wrote his Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester, and his Ode "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," the grandest religious lyric that we know of in any language.

In this country the same general remark holds true. Bryant's *Thanatopsis*, a solemn religious poem, was the product of his early youth, as were Willis's *Scripture pieces*, Miss Townsend's lines on "The Incomprehensibility of God," and Jones Very's *Sonnets* and other poems, which in depth and purity of thought and sentiment, as well as in beauty of imagery and exquisite simplicity of language, deserve a place beside the best religious poems of any age. A Christmas Hymn in eight stanzas, by the Rev. E. H. Sears, composed, we believe, before he entered on the duties of his profession,

stands at the head of its class, and can hardly be read without a thrill of emotion and an uplifting of the soul in harmony with the theme.

With these and possibly a few other exceptions, the finest productions of genius belong to the later periods of life. Generally speaking, there is a richness of style which can be perfected only by time. We see it in comparing the earlier and later writings of the most distinguished men. Let any one compare Burke's "Observations on a Late State of the Nation," written in 1769, or his "Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents," written the next year, though the author had then attained to the mature age of forty, with his "Reflections on the Revolution in France," or his "Letter to a Noble Lord," written a quarter of a century later, and we think he will find in the later works, that, while there is no abatement of enthusiasm, there is a mellowness and harmony of style, an ease and grandeur in the flow of his sentences, in short, an indefinable charm of expression, far beyond what is to be perceived in his earlier writings. Let one compare in the same way the earlier and the later writings of Washington, and he will hardly fail, we think, to feel the deeper tone of sentiment which pervades the language and affects the style of his later productions. The forty intervening years, with all their varying emotions, and trying experiences, and wisdom ripening through great and generous deeds, have infused something of their richness even into the severe simplicity and sound common-sense of his unimaginative language. We think that we recognize much of this improvement in Mr. Webster's speeches and writings. No one can read the *Life* or the writings of Dr. Channing without seeing the marks of this progress in the richer coloring and greater ease and simplicity of his style.

If the view that we have taken of this subject be sound, it should make us lenient in the judgments that we pass on the writings of the young, and should lead the young who are inspired with the noble ambition to produce something "which the world will not willingly let die," to prepare themselves as the great men of other days have done; not to be discouraged by any temporary failures, or elated by the successes of the

day, but to keep their faculties alive by constant effort; and to lay in stores of knowledge and of thought, that by and by, in the fulness of all their powers, they may bring forth the ripened fruit of a generous culture, mellowed by the large experience, the slowly maturing wisdom, and the ever-deepening emotions of the revolving years. It is thus that the greatest works of genius have been prepared in times past, and so it must be in times to come.

ART. XII.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

- 1.—*Junius Discovered*. By FREDERIC GRIFFIN. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1854. 16mo. pp. 310.

AMERICA supplies everything. It is always impossible to tell what will be the next curiosity she will exhibit to an amazed world. All that she knew herself of the Great Industrial Exhibition was, that she had not sent forward the labor-saving machines she was most proud of. And the prizes she won there were in many instances for things as little known at home as abroad. In this book she has outdone herself in singularity. She has actually furnished a candidate for the authorship of Junius.

It is our excellent old Governor Pownall, who is now advanced as the claimant to what are left of Junius's honors. It seems that he was in London while the letters were written, and in pretty constant opposition to government. He spelt *cheerful* with an *a*, as Junius did, and dated his letters with the name of the month first, instead of the numeral, as Junius also did. He was a Cambridge man, as Junius is supposed to have been, and more than fifty at the time, as Junius affected to be. He was neither a soldier nor a lawyer, nor was Junius. He was a member of Parliament, and so was Junius. Scattered through the book are other suggestions of similarity; but the above-named are some of the insignificant, and all the leading, points on which the argument is founded. Governor Pownall's handwriting is not like Junius's; but it is thought that, if he had disguised his hand, it would have been, or the reader is invited, if he prefer the alternative, to believe that Sir Philip Francis copied his letters for him. And thus the most formidable competitor is removed; unless, indeed, John Pownall copied them, as is also